



County Administrative Office
Governmental & Legislative Affairs

Josh Candelaria
Director

April 10, 2017

The Honorable Eloise Gomez Reyes
California State Assembly
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: **AB 550** – As Introduced February 14, 2017 - **SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblywoman Reyes:

The County of San Bernardino is writing in support of AB 550 which would increase the base allocation for local ombudsman programs from \$35,000 to \$100,000 per fiscal year. The bill would appropriate \$2,250,000 from the General Fund to the California Department of Aging for the purpose of increasing base allocation funding for that purpose.

The Long-Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman Program funding is used to provide advocacy services on behalf of residents residing in licensed long-term care facilities such as skilled nursing homes and residential care facilities. Ombudsmen monitor and investigate quality of life and quality of care issues, witness advanced health care directives in skilled nursing facilities, participate in resident and family councils, and collaborate with licensing and regulatory agencies.

However, funding for the program is dismal. The current funding allocation for the LTC Ombudsman organization was established in 1989; the existing formula has not been updated for inflation in 27 years and it does not reflect the growing cost of conducting business in California. In San Bernardino County, the largest geographic county in the nation, there are only five (5) full-time paid staff in the LTC Ombudsman Program; the program is mainly supported by volunteers who help ensure that mandated advocacy and complaint investigation services are enforced.

California's over age 65 population is projected to grow significantly, increasing from 4.3 million in 2010 to 6.3 million by 2020 and will double to 8.6 million by 2030. The oldest demographic, over 85, will grow by over 71 percent between 2010 and 2030. As the number of older adults who transition from living at home to assisted living or skilled nursing facilities rises, the LTC program is challenged with meeting the needs of these residents including but not limited to: quality of care, safety, resident rights, and protection from physical, financial and other forms of abuse.

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In order to serve the current need and to increase services for the growing population of seniors in long-term care, it is imperative to have a realistic base funding allocation in place. AB 550 seeks to adjust the base amount for a local Ombudsman Program to \$100,000, without negatively impacting the second half of the funding formula which allocates funds based on the number of facilities, number of beds and the square mileage of the program area served in comparison with the rest of the state.

For these reasons, the County of San Bernardino is pleased to support AB 550. If you have any questions regarding the County's position, please do not hesitate to contact Josh Candelaria, Director of Governmental and Legislative Affairs at (909) 387-4821 or jcandelaria@sbcounty.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Lovingood", enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Robert Lovingood
First District Supervisor
Chairman, San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors

c: San Bernardino County Legislative Delegation